

### Remarks

The Examiner remains of the view that Smith U.S. Patent No. 5, 516,298 anticipates Claims 1-10. It is respectfully submitted however that his analysis appears to be based upon an incorrect interpretation of the pending claims, and is flawed; reconsideration is therefore requested.

#### *The Smith Patent Disclosure*

As shown in Figure 2 of the reference, in the installation proposed by Smith a computer 22', a printer 23', and a fax machine 25' are all connected to a single "harness" 40. The power and data cables pass through individual apertures 32', and travel to the harness 40 along channels 30. At the harness 40, the cables are connected to individual data receptacles 48 and power receptacles 53 (Figure 4).

In the embodiment of the harness 40 that is shown in Figures 4, 5 and 6, the data and power receptacles 48 and 53 are connected externally via an access aperture 37 in the rear of the desk (Figure 3), e.g., by means of power leads 55. (The power leads 55 may be hard-wired to the harness 40, as in Figure 6).

In the embodiment of Figure 7, the need for a rear access aperture 37 is avoided by mounting the harness 40' on a standoff bracket, referred to as mounting frame 70. The external data leads 61 and power leads 55' travel along vertical channels 81 and 82 instead of passing through the rear of the desk.

### *The Rejection*

Turning now to the Examiner's stated reasons for rejection, if one takes as the starting point that the harness 40' of Figure 7 constitutes Applicant's claimed base unit, then data cables 61 would be analogous to the claimed communication bus and the data receptacles 53' would be analogous to the plurality of bus connectors. Such an arrangement is however clearly devoid of the required "plurality of user modules." There is merely a single computer and a collection of peripheral devices (printer, fax machine, etc.), which are all individually connected to the base unit (harness 40') via the channels 30 and the data and power receptacles 48' and 53'. The same analysis applies to the arrangement of Figure 4.

Applicant respectfully submits that Smith lacks the disclosure of even a single clearly identifiable "user module," as defined in the present claims, much less the required plurality of such modules. As a practical matter, one can only imagine the wiring chaos that would result from attempting to connect a plurality of computers to the harness 40, each with its own collection of peripheral devices.

Regarding the Examiner's Response to Arguments (section 3 on page 4 of the Office Action), if the individual voice/data cables connected to the receptacles 48 were to be deemed to collectively constitute a "bus," Smith might be constructed to disclose "a communications bus having a plurality of bus connectors." However, if one were to take that position, it is clear that Smith fails to adequately teach the essential "plurality of user modules for attachment to the base unit (panel 46) ... each having a PC port for connection with a local computer and at least one peripheral port

for connection with a user interface device, said ports of said each module being arranged such that a computer on the PC port is operably connected to said at least one peripheral port and, via the respective bus connector (receptacle 48), to the bus.”

Smith proposes that each receptacle 48 only be connected to either a computer 22 or a single peripheral device (23, 25, etc.). Applicant submits that it would not be reasonable to take the vague statement that is made in the sentence in column 6, at lines 8 to 12, to be a specific or adequate disclosure of a plurality of user modules having the ability to connect a computer to at least one peripheral port and to the bus, as required by the present claims. Rather, it is submitted that the sentence would be taken, by one of ordinary skill in the art, to suggest nothing more than, for example, that more than one telephone could be connected to each telephone receptacle, in a well-known manner.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed to be clear that Smith does not anticipate Applicant's desk attachment, and that the claimed invention is novel and patentable over the prior art. Withdrawal of the rejections are in order, and such action is earnestly solicited.


Respectfully submitted,  
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I, IRA S. DORMAN, hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed as set forth on the first page hereof, on September 6, 2006.



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